a leading developing country, India has put forward her candidature for permanent membership and has been participating actively in the deliberations of the Open Ended Working Group set up by the UN General Assembly. The mandate of the Open Ended Working Group has been extended by another year, so as to enable it to submit its report, including "any agreed recommendations", by the end of the 52nd session of the UN General Assembly. India believes that the selection of new permanent members should be done on global rather than on regional basis, on well-established global criteria and on a non-discriminatory basis.

Discussion on POW issue in Indo-Pak Talks

2504. SHRI VISHNU KANT SHASTRI
SHRIMATI ANANDI BEN JETHABHAI PATEL

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that quite a large number of Indian soldiers of 1971 war captured by Pakistan are languishing in Pakistani jails; if so, the number of such POWs;

(b) the reasons for not including such soldiers in the POW exchange deal with that country;

(c) whether this matter was discussed with Pakistan in the last Indo-Pak talks held recently in Delhi and Islamabad; if so, what was the outcome thereof; if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) whether Government would take up this issue with the Pakistan Government during the next round of talks; if not, how Government propose to get them released at the earliest?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA): (a) and (b) During the 1971 war, 552 Indian soldiers were taken prisoners of war by Pakistan. All these soldiers have been repatriated to India. Subsequently Government were informed about the 54 missing Indian soldiers. Their cases were taken up with the Government of Pakistan as and when they were brought to Government's notice. Government of Pakistan maintains that there are no such Indian defence personnel in its custody.

(c) and (d) The issue of Indian Prisoners of War (POWs) in Pakistan custody was taken up at the recent bilateral exchanges. Government would continue to pursue the matter with the Government of Pakistan.

Orientation to the Officers in Commercial wings of Indian Missions

2505. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item in The Times of India, dated the 2nd July, 1997, entitled "Missions abroad told to focus on trade, tourism";

(b) whether the officers posted to the commercial wings of Indian Missions abroad are given suitable business orientation to handle trade and commerce matters;

(c) if so, the details of such training etc. and how are these officers selected while posting;

(d) whether any cases of inept handling of business proposals by the Indian Mission Officials have come to notice; and

(e) if so, the remedial steps taken to make the officers more responsive?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERWANI): (a) Yes, Sir.